

# Return to Rome?

The Need for a Modern Worship Reformation

# Sacramentalism

The mass is not, Luther insisted, “a work which may be communicated to others, but the object of faith, . . . for the strengthening and nourishing of each one’s own faith.”

*Luther’s Works*, 36:51.

# Sacerdotalism

“The people were devout and came to worship; but even when they were present at worship, it was still clerical worship. . . . The people were not much more than spectators. This resulted largely from the strangeness of the language which was, and remained, Latin. . . . The people have become dumb.”

Joseph Jungmann, “The State of Liturgical Life on the Eve of the Reformation,” in *Pastoral Liturgy* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1962), 67–68.

# Sacerdotalism

“I also wish that we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which the people could sing. . . . For who doubts that originally all the people sang these which now only the choir sings or responds to while the bishop is consecrating?”

Luther, *Formula Missae*, Pelikan, Oswald, and Lehmann, *Luther's Works*, 53:36-37.

# Preoccupation with Sensory Experience

“Besides these external signs and holy possessions the church has other externals that do not sanctify it either in body or soul, nor were they instituted or commanded by God; . . . These things have no more than their natural effects.”

Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 41: 173.

# Preoccupation with Sensory Experience

“It is clear and indisputable that no external element or action can purify the soul.”

Ulrich Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, 1525, in Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 156.

# Preoccupation with Sensory Experience

“The Lord instituted nothing physical in his supper except the eating and drinking alone, and that for the sake of the spiritual, namely as in memory of him. . . . [Yet] we have observed that many cared neither to consider seriously the physical reception nor the spiritual memorial, but instead, just as before, were satisfied with seeing and material adoration.”

*Cypris, Martin Bucer's Ground and Reason, 117–18.*

# Preoccupation with Sensory Experience

“While the sacrament ought to have been a means of raising pious minds to heaven, the sacred symbols of the Supper were abused to an entirely different purpose, and men, contented with gazing upon them and worshiping them, never once thought of Christ.”

Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*.

# Preoccupation with Sensory Experience

“Our Lord Christ, says Augustine, has bound the fellowship of the new people together with sacraments, very few in number, very excellent in meaning, very easy to observe. How far from this simplicity is the multitude and variety of rites, with which we see the church entangled today, cannot be fully told.”

Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, x, 14.

# Individualization of Piety

“The decline in medieval worship must first of all be laid to clericalization and the related individualizing of the piety of the faithful, a piety that grew apart from the liturgy. . . . This liturgy was marked by an excess of feasts, by popular customs, and by details and superstitious practices that overlaid the heart of the faith.”

Herman A. Wegman, *Christian Worship in East and West: A Study Guide to Liturgical History* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1985), 217.

# Sacramentalism

“Contemporary worship is creating a place where God is expected to ‘show up,’ to engage with His people, and to manifest His presence in beautiful ways.”

In J. Matthew Pinson, ed., *Perspectives on Christian Worship: Five Views* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 187.

# Sacramentalism

“Praise begins by applauding God’s power, but it often brings us close enough to God that worship can respond to God’s presence. While the energy of praise is toward what God does, the energy of worship is toward who God is. The first is concerning with God’s performance, while the second is occupied with God’s personage. The thrust of worship, therefore, is higher than the thrust of praise.”

Judson Cornwall, *Let Us Worship* (Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Pub., 1983), 146.

# Sacramentalism

“Pentecostalism also has brought a certain expectation of experience to the forms of contemporary worship. . . . Simply put, Pentecostalism contributed contemporary worship’s sacramentality, that is, both the expectation that God’s presence could be encountered in worship and the normal means by which this encounter would happen . . . reshaping an understanding of God’s people praising and worshiping, especially as the people sang. What emerged was a sacramentality of music or corporate song expressed in biblical texts such as Psalm 22:3, where God is said to inhabit, dwell, or be enthroned upon the praises of God’s people. This biblical rooting of the liturgical expectation for encountering God, active and present through the Holy Spirit, molded how the extended worship sets were to be viewed. In the early days of contemporary worship, a set was not just about having opportunity to sing songs; it was a journey of being ushered into the presence of God.”

Lim and Ruth, 18.

# Sacramentalism

“The flow should move continuously with no interruptions; the flow should move naturally (using connections from the songs’ content, keys, and tempos); and the flow should move toward a goal of a climatic experience of true worship of God. Blomgren spelled out technical aspects for achieving proper flow: the content of the songs in sequence makes sense, having scriptural and thematic relatedness; the key signatures are conducive to easy, unjarring, and smooth transitions between songs; the temps of the songs (usually faster to slower overall with songs having similar temps grouped) contributing to a growing sense of closer encounter with God.”

Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 33.

# Sacramentalism

“Sacrifices were tangible means of grace that God used to draw people near to him experientially and relationally, and thus they were a kind of sacrament. If worship music falls within the category of sacrifice, then it accomplishes the same broadly sacramental function, namely, to be a tangible means through which God reveals himself and enables us to experience his special presence with us.”

Michael Farley, email correspondence in Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 35fn21.

# Sacramentalism

“As the idea of the sacramentality of praise developed, it usually picked up another quality that has characterized [Medieval] understanding of the Eucharist: a confidence in its instrumental effectiveness. In other words, the sacrament achieves what it symbolizes. . . . When God’s people praise, God will be present. The teachers of praise and worship are confident in this instrumental effectiveness for praise.”

Lim and Ruth, 134.

# Sacerdotalism

Perhaps a sure indication that associating God's presence with music has become widespread in contemporary worship is the expectation that the worship leader can facilitate the congregation's encounter with the divine by "ushering them into the presence of God." One worship scholar tells an anecdote to that effect. Relating the events at a pastor's conference in the late 1990s, the scholar noted that one pastor solicited applications for a musician's position by calling for someone who could "make God present through music."

Lim and Ruth, 122.

# Preoccupation with Sensory Experience

“Whether the tools are low-tech candles, incense and mini-bells or high-tech video systems, intelligent lights and hazers, today’s churchgoer accepts and even expects simultaneous sensory input.” He goes on to say that since God is completely other, we need to ask what part our eyes play in the worship of God. “How do we SEE God?” Though he gives some cautions with the visual, including our tendency toward idolatry, Kauflin insists, “When understood properly and used thoughtfully, visuals can serve to promote true worship of God.”

Bob Kauflin, workshop notes, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

# Worship Errors

- ◇ Sacramentalism
- ◇ Sacerdotalism
- ◇ Preoccupation with Sensory Experience
- ◇ Individualization of Piety

# Theology of Worship from the Old Testament

“What shall I say of ceremonies, the effect of which has been, that we have almost buried Christ, and returned to Jewish figures?”

“A new Judaism, as a substitute for that which God had distinctly abrogated, has again been reared up by means of numerous puerile extravagances, collected from different quarters. . . . Then, as if he were some successor of Aaron, he pretends that he offers a sacrifice to expiate the sins of the people.”

Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.10.14; *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, 21, 30.

# Expecting the Physical Worship of Heaven

“The first thing we complain of here is, that the people are entertained with showy ceremonies, while not a word is said of their significancy and truth.”

Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, 31.

# Theology of Worship from the Old Testament

- ◇ Invitation      Songs of Personal Testimony in the Camp
- ◇ Engagement    Through the Gates with Thanksgiving
- ◇ Exaltation      Into His Courts with Praise
- ◇ Adoration      Solemn Worship inside the Holy Place
- ◇ Intimacy        In the Holy of Holies

Expecting the Physical Worship of Heaven

# The Regulative Principle of Worship

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

Westminster Confession, 1:6

# The Regulative Principle of Worship

But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.

Westminster Confession, 22:1.

# The Regulative Principle of Worship

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

*Westminster Confession, 20:2.*

# The Regulative Principle of Worship

“The holy Scripture is the only place where any ordinance of God in the case aforesaid is to be found, they being the fountain-head, containing all the instituted Rules of both of Church and ordinances.”

John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* (London: n.p., 1643), 89.

# The Regulative Principle of Worship

“Now for an act of religious worship there must be a command of God. God is a jealous God, and will not suffer anything to be admitted into the worship of him, but what is according to his word and will.”

John Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity: Or a System of Practical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* (The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 2001), 899.

# The Regulative Principle of Worship

“That where a rule and express law is prescribed to men, that very prescription, is an express prohibition of the contrary.”

William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church Communion* (Baptist Standard Bearer, Incorporated, 2006), 28–29.

# The Regulative Principle of Worship

No acts of worship can properly be called holy, but such as the Almighty has enjoined. No man, nor any body of men have any authority to invent rites and ceremonies of worship; to change the ordinances which he has established; or to invent new ones . . . The divine Word is the only safe directory in what relates to his own immediate service. The question is not what we may think becoming, decent or proper, but what our gracious Master has authorized as such. In matters of religion, nothing bears the stamp of holiness but what God has ordained.

John Fawcett, *The Holiness Which Becometh the House of the Lord* (Halifax: Holden and Dawson, 1808), 25.

# Worship that Cannot Be Touched

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest <sup>19</sup> and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. <sup>20</sup> For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” <sup>21</sup> Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”

<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, <sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:18–24

# Simple, Spiritual Worship

For, if we would not throw every thing into confusion, we must never lose sight of the distinction between the old and the new dispensations, and of the fact that ceremonies, the observance of which was useful under the law, are now not only superfluous, but vicious and absurd. When Christ was absent and not yet manifested, ceremonies, by adumbrating, cherished the hope of his advent in the breasts of believers; but now that his glory is present and conspicuous, they only obscure it. And we see what God himself has done. For those ceremonies which he had commanded for a time he has abrogated for ever. Paul explains the reason,—first, that since the body has been manifested in Christ, they types have, of course, been withdrawn; and, secondly, that God is now pleased to instruct his Church after a different manner. Since, then, God has freed his Church from the bondage which he had imposed upon it, can any thing, I ask, be more perverse than for men to introduce a new bondage in place of the old?

Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, 51.